

reaching issues. This confidence comes in part from my strong belief that Mr. Wheeler agrees with me that the FCC must always have consumer protection and the public interest as its primary touchstones.

Acting FCC Chairwoman Mignon Clyburn has done an excellent job as the steward of the Commission over the last several months. I am proud of her accomplishments, especially her commencement of a proceeding to strengthen and expand the hugely successful E-Rate program, something our Nation's children deserve. But acting chairs of agencies can only accomplish so much, particularly when they have taken charge of an agency that lacks a full complement of its members. It is past time for the Senate to act on Mr. Wheeler's nomination and to put in place the President's permanent head of this essential agency.

At its core, the FCC is a regulatory agency. Too many have forgotten that the agency's fundamental responsibility is the regulation of communications networks. These regulations serve important policy goals. You cannot have universal service without regulation. You cannot ensure competition without regulation. You cannot have consumer protection without regulation. Given his experience and history, Mr. Wheeler understands the vital role of the Commission and the need for an active, smart regulator for the nation's communications markets.

The Members of the Senate Commerce Committee have fully vetted Mr. Wheeler's nomination. And an overwhelming, bipartisan majority of the committee favorably reported Mr. Wheeler's nomination out of committee in July. At his nomination hearing in June, Mr. Wheeler ably demonstrated his knowledge of the issues the FCC will face in the coming years. Mr. Wheeler answered all of the questions for the record submitted to him after that hearing—including all 78 questions from Republican committee Members. And he did so in a substantive and detailed manner. And honest, thoughtful responses by nominees have always been sufficient for this body to move forward when they are eminently qualified for a position and capable of fulfilling their mission.

It also has not been the practice of the Senate Commerce Committee to demand that a nominee to an independent regulatory agency like the FCC prejudice issues that might come before his or her agency. In fact, it was our colleague and former Commerce Committee Chairman Senator JOHN MCCAIN who, during consideration of a past Republican FCC Chairman nominee, said "Just as it is not appropriate for nominees to the bench be asked how they will vote on a specific issue that is currently before, or likely to come before, their court; it is not appropriate for commissioners who have quasi-judicial responsibilities to prejudice cases they must consider."

As Chairman of the FCC, Mr. Wheeler will be able to use the power of the

FCC to spur universal deployment of advanced technologies, foster job growth and innovation, and protect consumers. This is an agency that oversees, by some estimates, nearly one-fifth of the U.S. economy. This is an agency that has raised over \$50 billion for the U.S. Treasury through spectrum auctions. This is the agency that has, through smart policy, guided the Nation into the digital age. This is the agency that has wide-ranging authority over so many communications services that are a vital part of our daily lives. From broadband to wireless phones to television content to public safety communications—this little agency oversees it all.

Because we entrust the FCC with such great responsibility, we expect a lot from those whom the President chooses to run that agency. I am pleased to support Mr. Wheeler for Chairman of the FCC, and I call on my colleagues to do the same today. With all the important issues before the FCC, it is critical that the agency has a confirmed Chair and strong leader in place. I am confident, given Tom Wheeler's extensive experience and capabilities in the communications industry, he is the right person for this job.

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I wish to bring to my colleagues' attention the work of the Employee Benefit Research Institute, EBRI, in acknowledgment of the institute's 35th anniversary. EBRI is a nonpartisan, objective, and reliable source of information and analysis of private sector health and retirement issues in the Nation. Much of EBRI's work, including its data on qualified retirement accounts and its analysis of health care coverage, is unique and available nowhere else. As a research institution that is well respected by members and policy experts on both sides of the aisle, EBRI is frequently asked to testify on retirement, health, and economic security issues before committees in both the House and Senate. For more than three decades, the institute has provided credible, reliable, and objective research, data, and analysis that Congress can rely on. I congratulate EBRI on its 35th anniversary and look forward to many more years of its valuable, nonpartisan, and dependable analysis.

NATIONAL MEDICINE ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Centers for Disease Control has declared the misuse and abuse of some prescription and over-the-counter medicines in the United States to be an epidemic. According to the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH, there were over a quarter of a million new nonmedical

users of prescription drugs in the past year and 1.9 million new nonmedical users of either prescription or over-the-counter pain relievers. These staggering numbers reflect the urgent need to raise awareness about the dangers associated with medicine abuse. To this end, October has been designated National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month.

Millions of Americans are prescribed medicines every year to treat the symptoms of a variety of injuries and illnesses, from depression to the common cold. Many of these patients do not use the entire amount of medication they were prescribed and either forget about or do not know how to properly dispose of the leftover drug. As a result, half-filled bottles remain in medicine cabinets across the country for months or years. And many of these medicines, when not properly used or administered, can be just as deadly and addictive as street drugs like methamphetamine or cocaine. Indeed, according to the NSDUH, almost 70 percent of those who abused prescription drugs last year obtained them from a friend or relative, many of whom may have had excess drugs remaining in a family medicine cabinet.

As a result, Federal law enforcement and drug policy organizations like the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, as well as national advocacy groups such as the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, are reaching out to community coalitions throughout the Nation to help raise awareness and address the problem head on.

For example, in my home State of Iowa, the Van Buren County SAFE Coalition—with the help of the local pharmacy and the Van Buren County Reserve Officers—organizes regular drug take-back events at various locations throughout the county to provide an avenue to properly dispose of excess prescription drugs. Additionally, the local pharmacy there has started a take-back program that allows the pharmacy to collect unused and expired medication at any time. Another example of the response to this crisis is the Gateway Impact Coalition, located in Clinton, IA, that has collected nearly 3,500 pounds of old or unwanted medicine from residents in Clinton and Jackson Counties since 2008.

We can stop the growing problem of medicine abuse, but it will require all sectors of the community to join together to make it happen. I applaud the work of community coalitions, such as the Van Buren County SAFE Coalition and the Gateway Impact Coalition, along with many others throughout Iowa and the Nation. I urge my colleagues to do all they can in their home States to make their constituents aware of the dangers associated with the misuse and abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medicines.